

Natural Heritage Plan



2005

Update



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands

**State of Washington
Natural Heritage Plan 2005 Update
April 2005**

NATURAL HERITAGE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Voting Members

Megan Dethier, Ph.D., *Chairperson Scientist*
Alan Black, Ph.D., *Scientist*
Janelle Downs, Ph.D., *Scientist*
Ken Hammond, Ph.D., *General Public Representative*
Cheryl Schultz, Ph.D., *Scientist*
Robert Meier, *Forest Landowner Representative*
Daniel Schindler, Ph.D., *Scientist*
Cherie Kearney, *General Public Representative*
Wade Troutman, *Agricultural Landowner*

Ex-Officio Members

Jim Eychaner, *Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation*
Rob Fimbel, *State Parks and Recreation Commission*
Kit Metlen, *Department of Natural Resources*
Elizabeth Rodrick, *Department of Fish and Wildlife*
Jane Rubey, *Department of Ecology*

DNR ASSET MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING DIVISION

Pene Speaks, *Asst. Division Manager*

Natural Heritage Program

John Gamon, *Program Manager*
Florence Caplow, *Botanist*
Rex Crawford, Ph.D., *Ecologist*
Chris Chappell, *Ecologist*
Janice Miller, *Information Manager*
John Fleckenstein, *Zoologist*
Lisa Hallock, *Zoologist*
Jasa Holt, *Data Specialist*
Jack McMillen, Ph.D., *Data Manager*
Deborah Lindley, *Zoologist*
Sandy Swope Moody, *Environmental Review Coordinator*

Natural Areas Program / Olympia

Curt Pavola, *Program Manager*
Marsha Hixson, *Program Specialist*
Scott Pearson, Ph.D., *Natural Areas Ecologist*

Natural Areas Program / Regions

Carlo Abbruzzese, *Natural Areas Manager, Pacific Cascade Region*
John Byerly, *Pacific Crest District Manager*
Jim Cahill, *Natural Areas Manager, NW Region*
Roberta Davenport, *Natural Areas Manager, Pacific Cascade Region*
Jeanne Demorest, *Natural Areas Manager, SE Region*
Kathy Gunther, *Natural Areas Environmental Specialist, NW Region*
Kelly Heintz, *Natural Areas Manager, South Puget Sound Region*
Arne Johnson, *Natural Areas Manager, NE Region*
Janet Kearsley, *Natural Areas Manager, Olympic Region*
Christ Thomsen, *Natural Areas Manager, NW Region*
David Wilderman, *Natural Areas Ecologist, SE and NE Regions*
Michele Zukerberg, *Natural Areas Manager, South Puget Sound Region*

Editors

Blanche Sobottke
Princess Jackson-Smith

Graphic Design

Luis Prado

Production Support

Nancy Charbonneau

Cover Photo

White Salmon Oak
Natural Resources Conservation Area
by Laura Applegate

Photos used in this publication were taken
by DNR staff unless noted.

**This publication is available from:
Washington State Department
of Natural Resources
PO Box 47014
Olympia WA 98504-7014
(360) 902-1661**

**Visit our website:
www.dnr.wa.gov**

**Bibliographic reference to this
publication should read:**

**Washington Department of Natural
Resources. 2005. State of Washington
Natural Heritage Plan 2005 Update;
52pp. Olympia.**

**Persons needing this information
in an alternate format, may call
(360) 902-1661 or
TTY (360) 902-1125**

Printed in the U.S.A. with vegetable-based
ink on recycled and recyclable paper.

STATE OF WASHINGTON

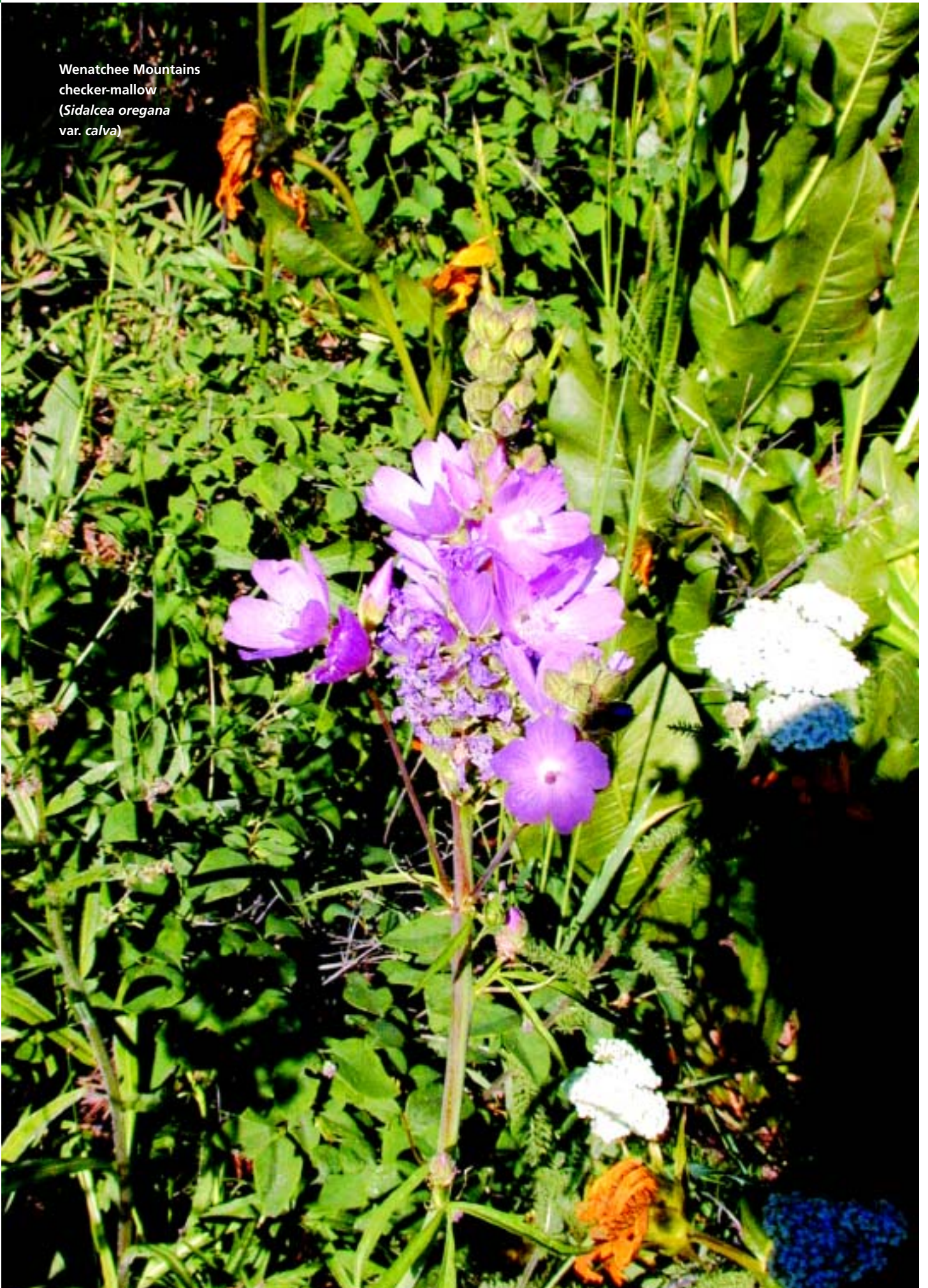
Natural Heritage Plan 2005 Update

3	Message from the Commissioner
4	Introduction
5	Changes in Legal and Policy Context
9	2003-2005 Natural Heritage Plan Implementation
31	2005-2007 Natural Heritage Priority Changes
35	2005-2007 Natural Heritage Plan Implementation Priority Projects and Activities
48	Acronyms



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands

Wenatchee Mountains
checker-mallow
(*Sidalcea oregana*
var. *calva*)



GREETINGS FROM THE COMMISSIONER

I am pleased to present to you the 2005 Update to the State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan. It is designed to be a companion document to the 2003 Natural Heritage Plan.

This update focuses on changes since 2003 and our priorities for the 2005-2007 Biennium. Since the Natural Heritage Plan is a reflection of the Natural Area Preserves Act (RCW 79.70) and policies designed to help implement the Act, it is important to discuss legal and policy changes that provide the context for implementation of the plan.

This update also documents much of the work that we have done to implement the 2003 Natural Heritage Plan. I think you will find the number and scope of the projects of the Natural Heritage and Natural Areas programs to be truly impressive. The information and expertise developed within these programs is applied to a wide variety of conservation activities.

But we are not alone in our efforts to build a solid foundation of information upon which to base conservation decisions. As you read this document, you will notice that we rely on partnerships and volunteers to accomplish our work. We acknowledge and thank the many agencies, organizations, and individuals who have contributed to our achievements.

There is still considerable work to be done. The priorities for the 2005-2007 Biennium are ambitious. We will continue to seek out new partnerships and create new opportunities for volunteers. We appreciate your continued interest and help in our efforts to help conserve the richness of Washington's natural heritage.

Sincerely,



DOUG SUTHERLAND
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC LANDS



Introduction

The Natural Area Preserves Act (RCW 79.70) requires that the Department of Natural Resources prepare a Natural Heritage Plan and update it biennially. The purpose of the plan is to provide the framework for the establishment of a statewide system of natural areas. The *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan* provides that framework by:

- Identifying the criteria and process by which natural areas are selected,
- Identifying priority ecosystems and species for protection,
- Outlining methods of protection, and
- Identifying the roles of agencies and organizations in natural area protection.

The 2003 edition of the *Natural Heritage Plan* provided a detailed description of each of the above items. Much of that information has not changed. The criteria and process by which natural areas are selected remain unchanged. The basic description of the statewide system of natural areas, the methods of protection, and the roles of various agencies and organizations are essentially the same as they were in 2003. For ease of reference, the 2003 *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan* has been retained in its original form and is available on-line at www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/plan/index.html. The 2005 update is a supplement to the 2003 plan; the two are companion documents.

Since 2003, there have been changes in the lists of priority ecosystems and species. There have also been changes in the legal and policy context within which the plan must be implemented. This 2005 *Update to the State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan* includes information on those changes. It also provides more detailed information on the range of activities that the Natural Heritage and Natural Areas programs are engaged in that help implement the Natural Area Preserves Act. The update includes:

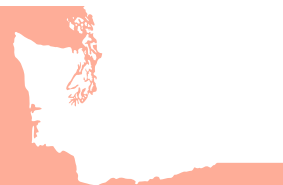
- Changes in the legal and policy context for the plan and the statewide system of natural areas,
- A status report on projects and activities undertaken to help implement the 2003 plan, and
- Changes in the lists of priority elements, and
- Project priorities for the Natural Heritage and Natural Areas programs for the 2005-2007 Biennium.

Top: Elk River Natural Resources Conservation Area



The complete list of priority elements for the 2005-2007 Biennium is available on-line at www.dnr.wa.gov/nhp/refdesk/plan/index.html.

Changes in Legal and Policy Context



The *Natural Heritage Plan* is meant to provide guidance regarding implementation of the Natural Area Preserves Act. Changes to the Act in recent years have prompted the Department of Natural Resources to review various policies and procedures related to implementation. There have also been other legislative and executive actions since the 2003 edition of the plan that may affect the *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan* and how the statewide system of natural areas is developed and managed. The following changes in legal and policy context are discussed below:

- Clarification of 2002 Legislative direction regarding public access to natural areas,
- Clarification of the role of the Natural Heritage Advisory Council in the process of identifying and recommending potential new Natural Resources Conservation Areas,
- The addition of a role for the Natural Heritage Program in the recognition of important bird areas,
- Development of a coordinated acquisitions strategy for recreation and conservation purposes for the state, and
- The creation of a Biodiversity Council, charged with developing a statewide biodiversity conservation strategy.

Public Access To Natural Area Preserves

The Department of Natural Resources has been working with the Natural Heritage Advisory Council and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to update the policy regarding public access to Natural Area Preserves. This effort has been in response to amendments in 2002 to the Natural Area Preserves Act clarifying the Department of Natural Resources' authority to limit public access and stipulating that "...Where appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis, a buffer zone with an increased low level of public access...around the environmentally sensitive areas..." may be created (RCW 79.70.030).

The Department of Natural Resources was also directed to develop a management plan for each natural area preserve that would include identification of "...areas with potential for low-impact public and environmental educational uses. The plans must specify the types of management activities and public uses that are permitted, consistent with the purposes of this chapter"(RCW 79.70.030).

The revised policy will go through appropriate environmental review and is expected to be adopted by the end of the 2003-2005 biennium.

// It is, therefore, the public policy of the State of Washington to secure for the people of present and future generations the benefit of an enduring resource of natural areas by establishing a system of natural area preserves, and to provide for the protection of these natural areas. //

REVISED
CODE OF WASHINGTON,
CHAPTER 79.70
(NATURAL AREA
PRESERVES ACT)

Natural Resources Conservation Areas

In 2003, the Legislature amended the Natural Area Preserves Act to explicitly include Natural Resources Conservation Areas (NRCAs) in the statewide system of natural areas (RCW 79.70.030). The Act was also amended to give the Natural Heritage Advisory Council the responsibility to "...recommend whether new areas proposed for protection be established as natural area preserves, natural resources conservation areas, a combination of both, or by some other protected status..." (RCW 79.70.080).

In response to this amendment, the Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Heritage Advisory Council (Council) have been developing criteria and a process for designating NRCAs, including a definition of the role of the Council in that process. Final decisions are expected during the 2005-2007 Biennium.

Important Bird Areas

A 2004 amendment to the Natural Area Preserves Act added the recognition of "important bird areas" as a function of the Natural Heritage Program. "Important bird areas" are defined as "...those areas jointly identified by the natural heritage program and a qualifying nonprofit organization using internationally recognized scientific criteria. These areas have been found to be necessary to conserve populations of wild waterfowl, upland game birds, songbirds, and other birds native to and migrating through Washington, and contain the habitats that birds are dependent upon for breeding, migration, shelter, and sustenance."

This non-regulatory program will combine the data, knowledge, and expertise of Audubon Washington with the methodology and data management systems used by the Natural Heritage Program. The combination will provide additional scientific tools for natural resource management and conservation efforts in the state.

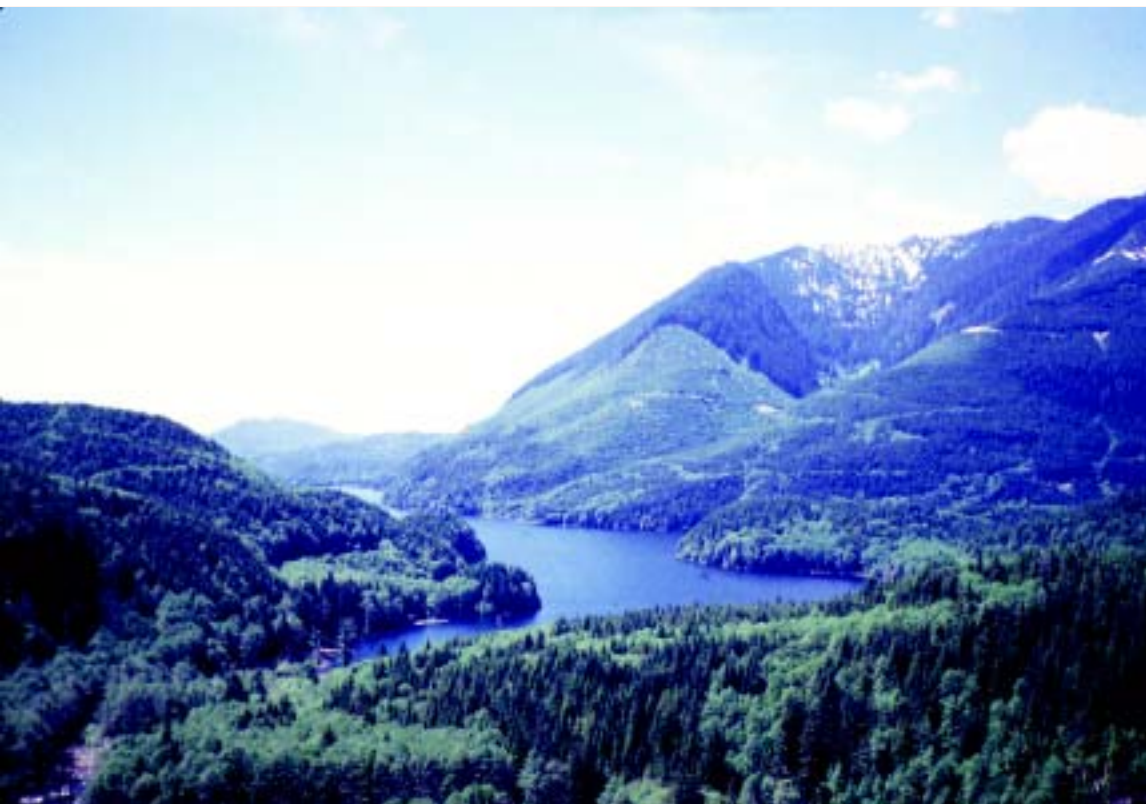
The Important Bird Area program is a global effort. It began in Europe in the mid 1980s with an international council of ornithological experts using an objective set of criteria to determine whether a site was an "Important Bird Area." The sites focus on wetlands, aquatic habitats and sites where birds congregate in larger numbers. Audubon Washington is leading efforts to nominate and identify such sites in Washington.

The Natural Heritage Program has initiated discussions with Audubon Washington regarding incorporating the important bird area function into the program's responsibilities, including the Natural Heritage Advisory Council's role in officially designating sites. Both the Natural Heritage Program and Audubon are pursuing funding to move this effort forward.

It is important to note that the Legislature, in adding this function to the Natural Area Preserves Act, made it clear that recognition of private property as an important bird area "...does not confer nor imply any rights of access or trespass onto the important bird area without full knowledge and consent of the owner...". Additionally, recognition of an important bird area does not require or create critical area designation under chapter 36.70A RCW.

Coordinated Acquisition Strategy for Recreation and Conservation Purposes

In 2004, the Legislature directed the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation to submit a recommendation regarding a statewide strategy for coordinating future acquisitions of land for recreation and habitat conservation purposes. The Legislature stated that the strategy should be consistent with criteria, policies and priorities guiding



Natural Resources Conservation Areas, such as Greider Ridge, contribute to the statewide system of natural areas.

the current Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program (WWRP) or, if not, it must identify the priorities, policies and goals that should apply. WWRP has been a major funding source for the Department of Natural Resources' natural areas acquisitions, in large part because there is a strong tie between the project review criteria used in the WWRP proposal evaluation process and the priorities established in the *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan*.

The Legislature also stated that the coordinated strategy should ensure that acquisitions (or disposals) fulfill a need that cannot be met by existing public lands. The priorities established for features listed in the *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan* (species and ecosystems) include consideration of whether those features are present in an existing natural area and whether they have adequate existing protection. Features that are not present in a natural area, or are not adequately protected, are listed as the priority features in need of protection. By implementing this system of priorities, natural areas acquisitions fulfill this requirement of the coordinated strategy requested by the Legislature.

Washington Biodiversity Council

In 2004, Governor Gary Locke issued an executive order establishing the Washington Biodiversity Council. The Council has been charged with developing a 30-year comprehensive strategy and implementation plan to "...sustainably protect [the state's] biodiversity heritage...." The strategy is to include voluntary incentive programs and delivery of information about the state's biodiversity over the Internet. The Department of Natural Resources has a representative on the Council and will be actively engaged in the efforts to achieve the Council's goals. The information housed within the Natural Heritage Program will be critical to those efforts. The priorities for ecosystems and species established in the *State of Washington Natural Heritage Plan*, and the protection already provided by the existing statewide system of natural areas, will also contribute to these efforts.

// Working to sustain and promote biodiversity as the full range of life in all its forms, explain its vital importance in Washington's economy and our quality of life, and encourage citizens to advance the stewardship of our natural heritage for future generations. //

BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL
MISSION STATEMENT